

1928-29.

After the death of James Merrett of the Rugby committee, a former Reserve scrum half of the late "eighties", I was appointed to take over the record of match results and scorers; details of converted goal scorers had not been registered up to that time; I had already instituted a players' match record in my year of captaincy. Consequently I separated the results of our two teams for greater and more understandable convenience, and have done so for our two Senior Teams ever since, as well as those of Cardiff Extras XV of 1964-69. The First (1st) XV results for 1928-29 were: P42, W25, L13, D4. Points 593-326. Our full-back B. O. "Ossie" Male, already the possessor of eleven Welsh caps, was appointed captain by the club members, and he nominated Kevin P. J. Turnbull, the flaxen haired forward as his deputy.

With the exception of a home match with Skewen, on the same day as one with Maesteg away, the fixture list of the First (1st) XV was comprised solely of first class clubs. That of the Second (1st) XV included Pontypridd, Maesteg, Cheltenham, Pontypool, Leicester (2), Coventry, Bath (2), Guys Hospital, Abertillery, London Welsh, Bradford, Manchester, London Irish, Northampton (2), Bedford, Penarth and Ebbw Vale. Consequently, the club met the highest number of first class clubs in this season than in any other in its history. The playing results of both XV's were creditable, and the appointment by the committee of a permanent captain for "The Other Side", Syd Cravos, was fully justified. His team results were: P34, W19, L14, D1, with 329 points to 241.

R. A. Cornish and I had fully retired, Bobby Delahay had gone to Torquay, but some of our players were emerging into greatness—Norman Fender a splendid back row forward, Tommy Stone versatile full-back, R. W. Boon the "cheeky chappie" on the wing, an all-rounder, E. Gwyn Davies and Graham Jones in the threequarters; we had the experienced back row man T. M. Williams, and we acquired a splendid prize from Llanelli in the person of Archie Skym, one of the greatest Welsh forwards of his time. The club had probably the best galaxy of talent since the war, and three Cardiff High School Old Boys were to make their appearance, they were Geoff Babbage at forward, Jackie Bowcott, inside half, and Stan Hughes at centre, there were some half-a-dozen Glamorgan County Police Force players available, and we did not miss the services of P.C. Dick Power of the Monmouthshire Police—the Welsh heavyweight boxing champion who retired after a few matches this season.

The season's results which follow should be of significant interest as they illustrate the class of opposition met by Male's team and Cravos's team on the same day, and the very narrow margin of defeat or victory in quite a number of matches. Blackheath suffered most losing by 42 points to three, they paid the penalty of being two men short and Cardiff's Jim Burns and Jack Poole of the Glamorgan Wanderers filled their two vacancies. Ossie Male kicked eight goals in this match and 67 in all for the season. For Male's XV our wings E. Gwyn Davies 31, and A. T. Thomas 14 were the top try scorers, followed by R. W. Boon 13, Graham Jones 10 and John Roberts nine. Three who qualified for caps were R. W. Boon, the forward Harry Brothers and A. T. Thomas who was later to become known as "Akka" in his role as player and committee man.

Cliff Cameron the wing in Syd Cravos's XV scored the most tries, sixteen. Incidentally, Vic Cravos, playing against Old Edwardians at home in December, scored a try from the full-back position which was converted by his brother and captain, Syd, with whose XV the following qualified for club caps: W. Barrett, Jim Coughlin, A. Clarke, Frank Kempson, Dr. T. J. Pittard and Tommy Stone.

In the Welsh international scene, Cardiff had the best representation since the war, threequarters E. Gwyn Davies, John Roberts and H. M. Bowcott; Frank Williams outside half, who had secured a post as sports master in Wakefield, W. "Bill" Roberts also at outside half and P.C. Bob Barrell the forward. John and "Bill" Roberts played in the same Welsh team against England, and were in opposing teams for Cambridge and Oxford in the Varsity match of 1928.

A matter which gave much pleasure to club and public was the fact that A. L. Gracie, the Harlequin centre who scored the winning try for Scotland v. Wales on the Cardiff Arms Park in 1923 and was shouldered high off the field by the admiring Welshmen, was now playing for Manchester. He wrote the "Quins" and begged them to allow him to play for them against Cardiff in their Easter Monday match. Could he be allowed to play his last game before his retirement . . . on the Cardiff Arms Park? His request was granted, he played, perhaps not so brilliantly in the twilight of his career. But surely this was a grand happening to recall in the annals of Rugby football! Quite a different event occurred on 9th February on the Arms Park in the Cardiff/Llanelli game. Dai John the "Scarlets" outside half was injured early in the match and went off the field, and the former Cardiff wing threequarter, "Codger" Johnson ran on to the field as a replacement with the tacit agreement of Cardiff's captain, Ossie Male. A sporting gesture this, but against the bye laws and a matter on which the Welsh Rugby Union took appropriate action with a mild censure on both clubs, who, in breaching the laws, had acted with a spontaneous sporting gesture.

By the end of the season the running of "Two First Fifteens" had invoked some criticism. The committee minutes show that many meetings were held to discuss their continuance, and complaints had been received in one form or another, from Leicester, Northampton, Pontypool, Cheltenham, Aberavon and Neath whose clubs did not want to play our "other team", the Second (1st) XV that was. The two first named cancelled fixtures for 1929-30 for which season the number of first class fixtures with the Second (1st) XV dropped sharply. The Rugby programmes under the editorship of Mr. I. T. Austin at a price of two pence was a remarkably fine production which contained some twelve sheets of very readable, topical and photographic material. Of its class it was probably the best Rugby football programme in Britain. But yet, the club still refused the application of the BBC to broadcast matches.

In September 1925, the late L. C. Watters, General Secretary of Cardiff Athletic Club at a meeting of the Rugby committee made a suggestion that they should run two First Fifteens instead of one First Team and one Reserve Team. His views were prompted by the needs of finance resulting from the purchase of the Cardiff Arms Park, and the likelihood of first class players being available, particularly amongst the backs.

Committee opinion was very much divided, but after several meetings it was finally decided by a bare majority of seven votes to six to adopt his suggestion with effect from season 1926–27. The experiment was to last for five seasons.

To help the committee make up their minds, the opinion of clubs was obtained and some of those in the top flight had misgivings, but most of those in the lower bracket regarded the scheme as a good one, as, in their case, it meant having *Cardiff* on their fixture lists instead of *Cardiff Reserves*.

Fixture cards printed showed the matches for each team, for the given Saturdays in one consecutive form. 78 matches were arranged for the season 1926–27. Actually 81 were played.

For each season of the experiment a captain and vice-captain were appointed in the accustomed manner, the former by the members and the latter by the committee following the recommendations of the captain, but the experiment caused much administrative confusion with selections of the teams, match records including those players, and for cap purposes, and even the description of the teams selected.

When some experience had been gained with running two First Fifteens, the committee found it necessary to have a player to specifically captain Cardiff's "Other Team", consequently captains were appointed, namely Syd Cravos, Dr. T. J. Pittard and Goff Retter for the seasons 1928–29, 1929–30 and 1930–31 respectively.

The term "Other Side" had come into regular use both inside the committee, and with clubs and the public. There was much ire in selection from time to time as to the "best team" to play against any given opposition, and top class clubs complained at receiving Cardiff's second team, or its "Other Team", according to mood, thereby deceiving their members and supporters. The Leicester, Aberavon and Northampton clubs were cases in point.

Leicester complained that Cardiff sent its "Other team" to play them on 10th November 1928, when, on the same Saturday date Cardiff played Newport at the Cardiff Arms Park, including in that side both the captain B. O. Male and the vice-captain Kevin Turnbull. The Leicester v. Cardiff match was rather unfortunate as both the Cardiff captain, Syd Cravos and Donald Macarthur another forward were ordered off the field for what was described in Cardiff circles as "trivial complaints".

Leicester's complaint may have been tinged with a measure of 'sour grapes'. They won the home match by only 8 points to 5, whilst at Cardiff Arms Park, Newport were beaten by 12 points to 6. On the return fixture at Cardiff Arms Park on 16th March 1929 Leicester were beaten by 8 points to 5 (the same score they had inflicted on Cardiff in November 1928) and Cardiff beat Gloucester at Kingsholm by 10 points to 5 on the same Saturday. Regrettably however, fixtures were broken off between the Leicester and Cardiff clubs and not resumed until 1945–46.

Northampton complained that for our match on their ground 12th January 1929, Cardiff had "fielded a weak, inexperienced, and unrepresentative side" and they would have to cancel the 1929–30 fixture. Cardiff had suffered defeat, heavily, by 29 points to nil, but on the Arms Park on the same day Cardiff succeeded in beating Swansea by five points to three. Happily in this case, Northampton apologised to Cardiff and fixtures were not broken off.

Aberavon's complaint was that for their match with us on 24th November 1928 "Cardiff's best side was not being sent to Aberavon", and in this case the Cardiff committee hurriedly decided "that B. O. Male's side should be sent to Aberavon instead of playing Guys Hospital on the Cardiff Arms Park."

Cardiff's second First Fifteen (the "Other Side") fared disastrously in the 1929–30 season winning only five matches out of 27, with three drawn. It had now become evident to the Rugby committee that the two First Fifteens experiment was not a success, and it was decided that with effect from season 1931–32 the club would revert to running one First Fifteen and one Reserves Fifteen the latter to be called Cardiff Athletic Fifteen which Syd Cravos dubbed as "The Rags".

In the last season of the experiment, Cardiff's "Other Team" won only 12 out of 29 matches.

SOME EXAMPLES OF FIXTURE CLASHES

DURING SEASONS 1926/27—1930/31

1926–27

Oct. 23—Blackheath	(A) L 3—5	Maesteg	(H) L 0—14
Dec. 11—Abertillery	(H) L 6—8	Llanelly	(A) L 3—6
Mar. 12—Llanelly	(H) L 7—8	Maesteg	(A) L 7—22
Apr. 20—Northampton	(H) L 6—18	Ebbw Vale	(A) L 13—22
Apr. 23—Swansea	(H) L 10—13	Pill Harriers	(A) L 5—8

1927–28

Oct. 22.—Penarth	(H) W 6—3	Blackheath	(A) L 7—16
Nov. 19—Utd. Services	(A) D 0—0	Neath	(H) D 3—3
Feb. 11—London Welsh	(H) L 3—12	Llanelly	(A) L 9—15
Mar. 31—Llanelly	(H) L 3—6	Maesteg	(A) L 3—8
Apr. 9—Harlequins	(H) L 11—19	Torquay	(A) L 3—16

1928–29

Oct. 20—Blackheath	(A) L 10—14	Pontypool	(H) L 4—5
Dec. 8—Llanelly	(A) L 13—14	London Welsh	(H) L 10—14
Feb. 9—Llanelly	(H) W 19—3	Cross Keys	(H) L 3—9
Mar. 9—Plymouth Alb.	(A) L 6—12	Northampton	(H) L 8—11
Apr. 20—Skewen	(H) W 25—8	Maesteg	(A) L 5—23

1929–30. The Second First Fifteen (the "Other Side") had the most disastrous record in the club's history winning only five matches out of 27 with three drawn. From January 1930 until the end of the season not one solitary match was won, and losses were sustained successively against Bristol United, Cinderford, Edgware, Briton Ferry, Pontypridd, Skewen, Maesteg, Abertillery, Pill Harriers, Stroud, Treorchy, Bedford and Cheltenham, most of these against second class opposition.

1930–31

Sep. 13—Bristol	(H) L 14—28	Maesteg	(A) L 0—11
Oct. 18—Gloucester	(A) L 10—17	Abertillery	(H) L 3—11
Feb. 14—Gloucester	(H) L 4—6	Abertillery	(A) L 0—14
Mar. 28—Llanelly	(A) L 6—10	Cross Keys	(H) L 6—12
Apr. 11—Swansea	(A) L 5—8	Blaina	(H) L 3—6